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News Release

For immediate release

FALL PRESCRIBED BURN PLANNED

Jemez Springs, NM – The Valles Caldera Trust is planning to implement a prescribed burn project that may begin as early as Tuesday, October 14th and last for 2-4 days. If conditions are not right next week, the burn may occur later in the season. The prescribed burn will be on 818 acres of the Valles Caldera National Preserve, north of NM Highway 4 in the Banco Bonito area near mile marker 30. Because of the location and elevation, smoke from the burn will be visible from all directions coming into the Jemez Mountains area. Smoke will linger a few days after the burn. The burn activity is not expected to impact recreation sites or necessitate road closures.

The purpose of the burn will be to reduce hazardous fuels and the chance for future catastrophic fire, and the restoration of fire in a fire adapted ecosystem. The area has been thinned and larger materials have been removed from the site. This pretreatment will allow safe use of low intensity fire to clean up residual slash and remove ponderosa pine seedlings that sprouted since the thinning.

The parameters for implementing a prescribed burn are based upon specific assessments, agency guidelines and safety protocols. Managers continuously monitor weather conditions during a burn including wind, temperature, and relative humidity. Fuel quantity and moisture are also measured.

Smoke will be visible and is expected to have variable effects on neighboring communities including Ponderosa, La Cueva, Sierra Los Pinos, Jemez Pueblo and areas near NM Hwy 4. Communities along US Highway 550 including San Ysidro, Zia Pueblo, Bernalillo and Rio Rancho may also be affected. The project will not begin unless all conditions support the burn and associated resources are available.

The pretreatment of the forest substantially reduced the amount of fuel in the project area and lessened the associated production of smoke. However, smoke from any prescribed fire can be a nuisance to some people. It may be a health concern for children, pregnant women, senior citizens, and those suffering from allergies, asthma, chemical sensitivities, or other heart or lung diseases. To reduce exposure to smoke, stay indoors as much as possible with windows, doors and vents closed. Avoid or limit physical activities outdoors.

In the evenings, smoke settles into low lying areas, including drainages and lifts by mid-morning when the sun rises. Residents living in such low-lying areas may be most affected. Information on health impacts from smoke can be found by calling the New Mexico Department of Health at 1-888-878-8992, or visit: <https://nmtracking.org/fire> .

The Valles Caldera Trust oversees the 88,900-acre Valles Caldera National Preserve, located in the Jemez Mountains of northern New Mexico. The Preserve was purchased by the federal government in 2000 under the Valles Caldera Preservation Act, and it is known for its huge meadows, abundant wildlife, meandering streams, remarkable scenery and science-based adaptive management. More information about the Preserve can be found at www.vallescaldera.gov.

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